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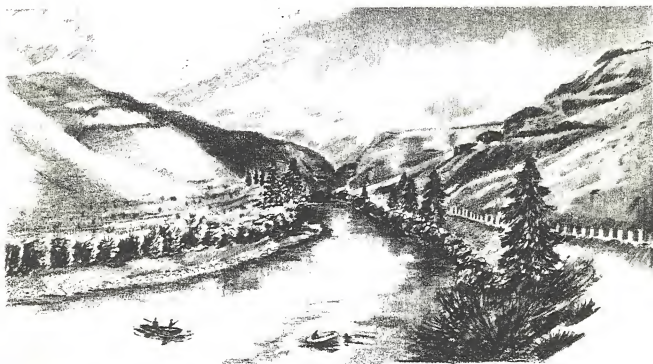
Wenatchee Resource Area
1133 N. Western Avenue
Wenatchee, Washington 98801

June 1988



Draft Recreation Management Plan for the Yakima River Canyon Recreation Area Washington

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SOUTHWEST REGION
DENVER REGIONAL CENTER
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**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Wenatchee Resource Area
1133 N. Western Avenue
Wenatchee, Washington 98801

June 15, 1988

Dear Reader:

This draft Recreation Management Plan for the Yakima River Canyon (YRC) is presented for your review and comment. It describes the proposed management direction for managing the Roza, Squaw Creek, and Umtanum Creek recreation sites.

This plan is organized to provide you with a brief overview of the management situation, setting, and constraints that affect the management of, not only the three recreation sites but, the BLM-administered lands in the Yakima River Canyon as well. The concerns or issues that have been expressed by the general public and BLM are listed along with the objectives and management actions that BLM proposes.

Three public meetings are scheduled to review and receive comments on the plan. They will be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on the following days at the identified locations:

July 18, 1988, Holiday Inn, in Yakima;
July 19, 1988, Ellensburg Inn, in Ellensburg;
July 20, 1988, Holiday Inn, in Bellevue;

After comments are received and reviewed, a final management plan will be prepared incorporating any revisions, additions, and deletions which may be necessary as a result of public comment. Depending on the degree of change necessary, the final will be released either in the form of a correction sheet or as a new document. Interested parties should retain their copies of this draft for review when the final is released.

Sincerely yours,

James F. Fisher
Wenatchee Resource Area Manager

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Bureau of Land Management
Wenatchee Resource Area
June, 1988

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Draft Recreation Management Plan for the Yakima River Canyon Recreation Area Washington

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT LIBRARY
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Part 1

Introduction

The Yakima River Canyon (YRC) is located just east of the Cascade Mountain range, between the cities of Ellensburg and Yakima, Wash. It extends for nearly 24 of the more than 35 river miles that separate these two cities (see map).

The YRC for many years has been a popular place for fishing and hunting. As a result of its popularity, the Washington State Department of Wildlife (WSDW) and the Bureau of Land Management signed a cooperative management agreement to manage the public lands in the YRC for fishing and hunting. This agreement resulted in the development of three recreation sites on BLM Lands along the Yakima River: Roza; Squaw Creek; and Umtanum Creek.

A boat launch was constructed at the Roza recreation site and two pit toilets were installed at each site. The popularity of this area has grown. Fishermen and hunters use these sites intensively throughout the year. More and more effort has been required to maintain them. Over the years, this area has attracted other types of recreation uses, primarily rafting, boating, picnicking, and camping. These uses now rival, and in some instances overshadow, the fishing and hunting activities.

To further emphasize the recreational importance of the YRC, the Washington State Parks and Recreation proposes construction of an 81 unit campground on State land near the village of Thrall.

As a result of the change in use, the WSDW determined that it no longer could justify the expense of its participation in the cooperative management of the YRC. Therefore, in July 1987, the WSDW requested that the cooperative agreement terminate on May 1, 1988, thus allowing BLM time to execute a smooth transition from an inactive management status to a more intense management status.

BLM subsequently scheduled public meetings in Yakima and Ellensburg in November 1987. During these initial public scoping meetings several questions arose such as: Should additional land be acquired; should other management options be considered; what type of visitor use data is needed; should BLM develop a coordinated river management approach on this stretch of the Yakima River; and/or should BLM prepare a river management plan that includes a plan for the three recreation sites. Because the recreation sites required immediate attention and because the river management planning options would require more public involvement, information, and time than was available, it was decided that a two-phase planning approach was needed. Therefore,

the actions presented here are separated into two phases. Phase 1 concerns management actions focusing on the immediate problem of resolving the issues identified for the three recreation sites. Phase 2 concerns the issues of coordinated river management.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this plan is to provide BLM a basis for making management decisions relating to federal lands within the YRC. The primary focus of this plan will be on the recreation sites of Umtanum Creek, Squaw Creek, and Roza. A secondary purpose is to gather information over the next three years for the preparation of a river management plan for the YRC Recreation Area.

Relationship to Land Use Planning

The federal lands in the YRC were identified in the Yakima River Canyon Unit Resource Analysis in 1971 and again in the Spokane District Resource Management Plan as requiring special management with emphasis on fishing, hunting, and other forms of recreation. The cooperative management agreement with the WSDW was the means by which this management emphasis was implemented. As stated previously, this cooperative agreement has been terminated; Management of these lands for recreation and wildlife habitat purposes, however, will continue under BLM administration.

Setting and Multiple Resource Values

Location

Umtanum Creek, Squaw Creek and Roza recreation sites all are located along the Yakima River within the Yakima River Canyon area.

This canyon is located in south-central Washington. It extends for nearly 24 river miles, starting from a point approximately five miles south of the city of Ellensburg to its terminus about two miles into Yakima County.

There are no communities or major concentrations of people in the area. However, there are two major communities situated near the north and south ends of the canyon. Ellensburg, population 11,400, is near the north end, and the city of Yakima, population 49,590, is located near the south end.

Access

Access to the YRC recreation sites is provided by State Highway 821. This highway parallels the Yakima River and up until completion of Interstate 82 served as the primary route of travel between Ellensburg and Yakima. Highway 821 is designated as a State Scenic Highway by the State of Washington.

Area and Ownership

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 15 parcels of public land totaling more than 4,000 acres in the Yakima River Canyon. Six of these parcels lack legal and physical access. The remaining nine parcels are accessible via the Yakima Canyon Scenic and Recreational Highway. Most of the lands are in Kittitas County (See map). Table 1 shows the ownership breakdown.

Table 1—Yakima River Canyon Recreation Area Ownership Breakdown

	Acres	Percent of total land
United States (BLM)	4,210.50	17%
State Department of Game	8,503.82	31%
State Department of Natural Resources	640.00	2%
State Parks and Recreation	64.00	
Private	13,623.00	50%
Totals	27,081.32	100%

Climate

The YRC is located in an arid climate. The average annual rainfall ranges from seven to 10 inches. Fifty percent of this falls in the four months from October through January.

Snowfall ranges from 15 to 30 inches annually with accumulated depths of five to 20 inches.

During the warmest months temperatures range from highs of 85 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit to lows of 55 to 65 degrees. Periodic temperatures reaching in excess of 100 degrees are common.

During the winter months, temperatures range from highs of 25 to 35 degrees with lows of 15 to 25 degrees. Maximum temperatures are below freezing on 20 to 40 days of the year.

The prevailing wind is from the west and northwest.

Fog and cloudiness in the valleys is common during the colder months.

Topography

The topography varies from steep slopes and high ridges to small level coves and bottom lands of the Yakima River and its tributaries.

The highest point is 3,225 feet above sea level at Baldy Peak. The lowest point is 1,250 feet in elevation at the point where the river leaves the planning area.

Hydrology

The Yakima River is one of the principal streams draining the east slope of the Cascade Mountain range. It meanders through the Yakima Canyon in a southerly direction for a distance of about 24 miles.

The river enters the unit at an elevation of 1,440 feet and drops about 7.9 feet per mile, leaving the unit at 1,250 feet in elevation.

The main tributaries to the river in the planning unit are Umtanum Creek, Burbank Creek, Squaw Creek and Roza Creek.

Flow data gathered by the US Geological Survey for the Yakima River indicate that peak flows occur during June, July and August. The mean annual discharge is approximately 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) with a maximum of about 6,000 cfs and a minimum flow of about 200 cfs.

Vegetation

Big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) and bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*) are the dominant species in the planning area. Cusick bluegrass (*Poa cusickii*) and Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*) are found in the plant composition at the higher elevations and on the north exposures where the soil is moderately deep.

The shallow range sites support increasing amount of stiff sagebrush (*Artemisia rigida*), buckwheats (*Eriogonum species*) and Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), while needle grasses (*Stipa species*) tend to be the prevalent grass species found growing on sandy sites. Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) trees are scattered throughout the lower elevations and bottomlands with alder, aspen, dogwood, cottonwood and willows more or less forming a greenbelt along the river's edge.

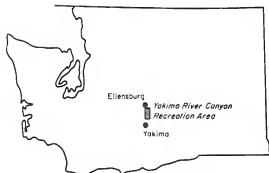
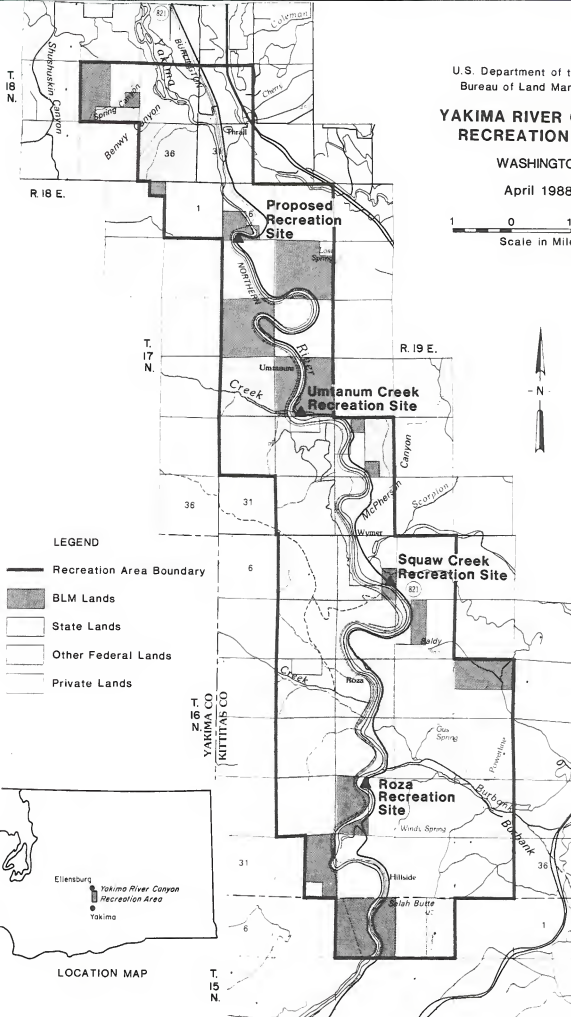
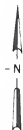
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

YAKIMA RIVER CANYON RECREATION AREA

WASHINGTON

April 1988

1 0 1 2
Scale in Miles



LOCATION MAP

Fish and Wildlife Habitat

The Yakima River is considered a blue-ribbon trout stream. Game species in the river include rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, dolly varden, some German brown trout, small-mouth bass, occasional large-mouth bass, steelhead trout, chinook salmon, Coho salmon, and whitefish. Non game fish include carp, sucker, sculpin, lamprey and squaw fish. Big-game species on the unit include mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, California bighorn sheep, and cougar.

The only upland "small" game mammal on the unit is the Nuttalls cottontail-rabbit. Populations are considered good on the western portion of the area and poor on the eastern portion. Other upland game species include chukar, gray partridge, mourning dove, California quail, ring-necked pheasant, and sage grouse. The only waterfowl area on the unit is the Yakima River. Nesting is restricted mainly to mallards and Canada geese with some common mergansers and wood ducks. Nesting densities are estimated at 1-1/2 broods per mile of river with about 150 birds produced.

The YRC has one of the highest concentrations of nesting raptors in Washington. Eleven species nest in the canyon and an additional nine species visit the canyon in the winter or during spring and fall migrations. American kestrels, red-tailed hawks, and prairie falcons are the most common breeding raptors and the bald eagle is one of the most conspicuous winter visitors. Great horned owls are the most common of the five species of owls that nest in the area.

Recreation

Initially the YRC was used primarily important for hunting and fishing. This aspect has not changed. Float trips, power boating, camping and picnicking now rival hunting and fishing in use.

Recently there has been an increased interest in backpacking, particularly in the major tributary canyons of Umtanum Creek and Roza Creek.

Rockhounding is another recreational pursuit. It is a continuous activity in the spring and summer. The petrified wood is of good quality and occurs in Sec. 4, T. 14 N., R. 19 E.; and Sec. 20, T. 16 N., R. 19 E.

Other activities include photography, wildlife viewing and general sightseeing.

Cultural Resource Values

Only 23 Paleolndian sites have been reported in Washington State and unfortunately many of these are small surface sites that were collected by hobbyists and poorly reported. There is no known Pleisto-

cene-age site in the recreation area, but one was found near the mouth of the Yakima River and a second was located 30 miles east of the recreation area at Vantage on the Columbia River. Because of a limited data base it is very difficult to predict where other sites may be found.

At least one village site is known of in the recreation area. At the juncture of Umtanum Creek and the river a site with several housepits was excavated in the 1960s.

In 1812, Alexander Ross explored the Yakima River basin for the American Pacific Fur Co. Initially there was some hostility between the existing residents of the canyon and the trappers, but fur trade brigades did operate actively in the canyon.

Artifact collection without a permit is prohibited on all federal lands.

Minerals

Mineral production from the unit at present is restricted to rock for road building and maintenance. There are no metallic mineral vein deposits in the unit. Some extremely fine placer gold is found in the gravel bars along the river.

Diatomite was produced in limited quantities from several pits in the area. The abandoned pit in SW 1/4 NE 1/4, Sec. 17, T. 15 N., R. 19 E., produced for several years before 1933. It was operated by a Japanese concern and material was shipped to Japan. Production figures are not available. The largest producing mines were outside the unit to the east on federal lands in what is now the Yakima Firing Center. They all are closed because of the large high-grade deposits operating in California and Nevada. Minor amounts of fullers earth were produced with the diatomite.

Gold was mined during the 1930's from a small gravel bar in NW 1/4 NW 1/4, Sec. 10, T. 15 N., R. 19 E. Small piles of gravel and a pond are all that remain of the workings that covered approximately five acres. No production records are available.

Rock and gravel were removed from various pits in Sec. 9, 16, and 28, T. 15 N., R. 19 E., and Sec. 20 and 33, T. 16 N., R. 19 E., for road building and maintenance in the unit. These pit sites no longer are used except for minor road maintenance.

These activities have resulted in the disturbance of approximately 40 acres.

Range (Livestock)

Grazing on BLM Lands is regulated under Sec. 15 of the Taylor Grazing Act. In the YRC area, 203 animal unit months of livestock use currently are authorized on four allotments. These four allotments involve 1,522 acres of the 4,210 acres of federal lands in the YRC.

User Profile and Visitation Estimates

The Yakima River Canyon is rapidly becoming recognized as a prime recreational area throughout the state. Outstanding recreational opportunities are available in the YRC, including fishing, hunting, drift boating, rafting, water skiing, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, photography, nature study, rock-hounding and camping.

Party Sizes

Party sizes range from as small as one or two to as many as 15 to 20 people. The smaller groups usually are fishermen. The larger groups usually are associated with boating or rafting activities. Occasionally, group size may exceed 50 people.

Length of Stay

Many visitors to the YRC come from nearby towns, and the lengths of stays usually are of short duration (two to six hours). Longer stays (one to two days) also occur and usually are associated with people who travel from outside the immediate area.

Visitation Estimates

Accurate visitor use data is lacking. However, the information that is available indicates that several thousand people float this river each year. On some weekends, 200 to 300 persons have been observed using the Roza recreation site alone. Comparable numbers also have been noted at the Squaw Creek and Umtanum Creek sites. The proximity of the YRC to the towns of Yakima and Ellensburg results in heavy weekday and evening usage during the warm spring and summer months. Its location relative to Interstates 90 and 82 affords easy access to the YRC for residents of Seattle, Spokane, and the Tri-Cities areas.

In addition, more than 40 fishing clubs notified BLM that they have a keen interest in the YRC because most of their members fish this stretch of the river at one time or another during spring and summer periods.

Spot-checking of the YRC by BLM personnel in the summer of 1987 indicated that visitor use was higher than previously anticipated. Indications were that on any given weekend day period from June to August, anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 people could be observed using the YRC for either boating, floating, fishing or camping. Weekday use was slightly lower, ranging from 500 to 1,000 per day.

Management Issues

The recognition and resolution of important issues is the key to successful planning and management. This section identifies the issues that will be addressed in the management plan in Part III.

Issue 1. California bighorn sheep. Portions of the Yakima River Canyon (YRC) provide crucial habitat for bighorn sheep. Increasing recreation use in the YRC could result in increased pressures (i.e. disturbance) on the bighorn sheep lambing ground.

Issue 2. The Yakima River Cliffs and Umtanum Ridge Area of Critical Environmental Concern. This ACEC was designated in the Spokane Resource Management Plan in an effort to preserve habitat for two federal-candidate plant species. Any management actions proposed for the YRC must be designed to avoid impacts to the ACEC.

Issue 3. Health and safety. Recreation use in the YRC has increased dramatically over the past 10 years. As a result, the three sites: Roza; Squaw Creek; and Umtanum Creek, have had to absorb most of the pressures. The toilet and trash collection facilities originally designed for fishermen and hunter have had to absorb additional pressures from boaters, hikers, floaters and campers. This has resulted in a use in excess of what these sites originally were designed to handle. Sanitation, litter, lack of room for camping trailers and floater traffic, and other user conflicts in a limited space must be addressed.

Issue 4. Parking and Traffic Control. As stated under Issue 3, health and safety, the three recreation sites in the YRC were designed for fishing and hunting. These no longer are the dominant uses. On holidays such as the Fourth of July weekend, more than 130 automobiles and campers with boat trailers have been counted on the Roza recreation site alone. These areas initially were designed for a dispersed parking arrangement. Consequently they can handle only a portion of the present weekend loads. This has produced spillover parking along the highway and conflicts between the various recreationists.

Issue 5. Trespass of private lands adjacent to recreation sites. As recreation use of the three recreation sites in the YRC has increased, a spillover affect on private lands has occurred. This has resulted in damage and/or destruction to both government property, such as fences, and private property, such as crops or structures. Therefore, management of the recreation sites must consider carrying capacity.

Issue 6. Fire damage. Resource values include crucial bighorn sheep lambing grounds, as well as the area's high visual and scenic qualities. High-use periods of the three recreation sites coincide with the normal high fire danger period, (i.e., May 15 - Sept. 15). Large man-caused wildfires have occurred in this area in the recent past. Management prescriptions must address prevention of wildfire.

Issue 7. Camping, picnicking, day-use. Initially, these three recreation sites were intended to support fishing and hunting. Over the years this use has grown to include camping, picnicking, speed boating, water skiing, rafting, and other day-time activities. The existing facilities no longer can adequately sustain such use. Improvements and modifications are necessary to provide for a safe and enjoyable recreational experience for all users. Visitor use restrictions also may be necessary.

Issue 8. Land ownership. There is a limited amount of public land in the YRC available to accommodate the increased recreational demand. In order to accommodate the increased recreational uses, and mitigate associated trespass and access problems, the public has recommended, through oral and written comments, that BLM acquire key private tracts now being abused by use. They also recommend all state and federal agencies pursue land exchanges or cooperative management agreements for total river management.

Issue 9. Law enforcement. The Washington State Department of Wildlife, Kittitas County Sheriff, and the Washington State Patrol reported numerous infractions occurring at these recreation sites. These infractions ranged from domestic quarrels and use of illicit drugs and alcohol to unsafe discharging of firearms and open vandalism of public and private property. None of these existing problems, nor the other issues, can be resolved properly without adequate law enforcement. The remoteness of the area makes it difficult for existing law enforcement authorities to patrol these areas on a regular basis.



Part II

Management Objectives and Constraints

The Yakima River Canyon will be managed to preserve its natural qualities. Visitor and resource management will strive to enhance opportunities for high quality recreation experiences. Recreation and other resource uses will be permitted to the extent that the natural and cultural characteristics of the river environment are not degraded.

The following objectives will guide future management and use of the Yakima River Canyon. In accomplishing objectives, the BLM will involve and cooperate with other public agencies, private interests and resource users.

Resource Management Objectives

- (1) Provide for safe, healthy, and lawful use of the Yakima River Canyon resources.
- (2) Maintain and/or enhance the scenic, cultural and natural qualities within the Yakima River Canyon corridor.
- (3) Provide for a diversity of recreational experiences and allow other compatible resource management opportunities.

Management Constraints

Factors which, because of law, policy, regulation or other planning commitments influence the development of management actions presented in Part III include:

1. Four grazing leases which include 1,522 acres of public land within allotment boundaries.
2. The Yakima River Cliffs and Umtanum Ridge Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
3. The Washington State Scenic and Recreational Highway (Highway 821).
4. Significant historic and prehistoric sites located in the YRC.
5. Limited escape cover and nesting habitat for many wildlife species.
6. Private camp-grounds located along the river.
7. Complex ownership pattern of the lands within the YRC.
8. Multi-agency jurisdiction within the YRC.

Part III

Management Actions

On the succeeding pages, the issues and objectives which were discussed in Parts I and II are presented along with the planned management actions in a matrix format to facilitate tracking.

Phase 1 (Management actions pertaining to Roza, Squaw Creek, and Umtanum Creek recreation sites.)

Management Objectives	Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide for safe, healthy, and lawful use of the Yakima River Canyon resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health and safety.• Parking and traffic control.• Trespass of private lands adjacent to recreation sites.• Fire damage.• Law enforcement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain and/or enhance the scenic, cultural and natural qualities within the Yakima River Canyon corridor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yakima River Cliffs and Umtanum Ridge Area of Critical Environmental Concern.• California Bighorn Sheep.

Management Actions

1. Promote water safety etiquette at the boat launches and rafter takeout points.
2. Move boat ramp on the Roza recreation site to the south and establish a floater take-out point at the previous location of the boat ramp.
3. Construct boat ramp at the Squaw Creek recreation site.
4. Upgrade restroom facilities to BLM standards.
5. Construct traffic control barriers at the Roza and Squaw Creek recreation sites.
6. Designate separate parking areas for passenger vehicles and other vehicles with boat trailers at Roza.
7. Establish no-parking areas at the boat ramps and floater take-out points at Squaw Creek and Roza recreation sites.
8. Mark the boundary of the recreation sites.
9. Conduct regular patrols of the three recreation sites.
10. Post new signs on the three recreation sites indicating change in administration.
11. Coordinate and develop a multi-agency fire ordinance. (Emphasis would be on reducing wildfires through control of campfire locations and discharge of fireworks.)
12. Prohibit use of fire works.
13. Monitor habitats for *Lomatium tuberosum* and *Erigeron basalticus* to detect changes in species numbers and habitat.
14. Establish an information program in the YRC area to assist visitors.
15. Conduct a Class II cultural resources survey of the public lands where recreation use is expected to increase. Conduct a Class I survey on all remaining lands in the YRC recreation area.
16. Restrict access to sensitive habitat areas west of the river during the lambing season, from May 1 to June 30.
17. Monitor bighorn sheep populations to detect changes in numbers and habitat use.
18. Prohibit domestic sheep grazing on all Federal lands within the YRC.
19. Initiate visitor education programs as necessary to allow for the maintenance and/or enhancement of Bighorn sheep populations and habitat.

Management Objective

Issue

- Provide for a diversity of recreational experiences and allow other compatible resource management opportunities.

- Land ownership.
- Camping, picnicking, day-use.

Management Actions

20. Mark public lands along the river to minimize inadvertent or accidental trespass.
21. Acquire the following Private lands in: T. 16 N., R. 19 E., Sec. 7 (365.5 acres), Sec. 17 (284 acres), 29 (38.84 acres), T. 15 N., R. 19 E., Sec. 33 (272.31 acres). As opportunities develop, acquire other private or State owned lands in the YRC to improve recreational opportunities, to provide for protection or improvement of key fish and wildlife habitats, and to provide for the protection of significant cultural resource sites.
22. Develop site plans for Roza, Squaw Creek, and Umtanum Creek recreation sites.
23. Develop a river access point in Sec. 6, T. 16 N., R. 19 E.
24. Control noxious weeds on recreation sites.
25. Designate all three recreation sites as day-use facilities.
26. Phase out camping at all recreation sites as the Washington State Parks and Recreation campground at Thrall is developed.

Phase 2 (Management actions pertaining to river management that would be implemented by October 1991.)

27. Continue to monitor visitor use.
28. Develop cooperative management agreements with other agencies and private landowners within the YRC. These agreements would emphasize recreation, wildlife habitat and range management activities,
29. Amend this Plan to include river management considerations by 1991.

Part IV

Yakima River Canyon Cost Estimate Summary (In Thousand Dollars)

Facility	Year				
	1	2	3	4	5
Post new signs on the three recreation sites indicating change in administration.	0.5				
Mark the boundary of the recreation sites.	0.1				
Mark public lands along the river to minimize inadvertent or accidental trespass.		3.0			
Move boat ramp on the Roza Recreation Site.					
Project Planning/Design	0.5				
Construction		3.5			
Upgrade rest room facilities to BLM standards.					
Project Planning/Design	1.0				
Construction		13.0	13.0	13.0	
Construct traffic control barriers at the Roza and Squaw Creek Recreation Sites.					
Project Planning	1.0				
Survey & Design		2.0			
Construction			4.0		
Construct boat ramp at the Squaw Creek Recreation Site.					
Project Planning/Design		0.5			
Construction			3.5		
Develop a river access point in Section 6, T. 16 N., R. 19 E.					
Project Planning	3.0				
Land & Easement Acquisition		6.0*			
Project Survey & Design		3.0			
Construction			13.0	7.0	
Facility Operations Maintenance and Law Enforcement	30.0	30.0	30.0	25.0	25.0
Total	36.1	61.0	63.5	45.0	25.0

*Assumes acquisition through exchange.

Part V

Yakima River Canyon Recreation Management Plan Environmental Assessment

OR 130 08 14

Purpose and Need for the Proposal

This plan is needed to provide management direction for Umtanum Creek, Squaw Creek, and Roza Recreation Sites in the YRC because in July of 1987, the Washington State Department of Wildlife (WSDW) notified BLM that the existing cooperative agreement which gave the WSDW jurisdiction over these sites would terminate on May 1, 1988. At that time BLM would be required to assume total management of the three recreation sites.

Another reason for this plan is to provide BLM with a basis for making management decisions relating to the other public lands within the Yakima River Canyon (YRC) and provide BLM with a mechanism to gather information over the next three years for the purpose of preparing a River Management Plan for the YRC.

Description of the Proposed Action and Alternative

Proposed Action

- Promote water safety etiquette at the boat launches and rafter takeout points.
- Move boat ramp on the Roza recreation site to the south about 200 feet and establish a floater takeout point at the previous location of the boat ramp.
- Construct boat ramp at the Squaw Creek recreation site.
- Upgrade restroom facilities to BLM standards.
- Construct traffic control barriers at the Roza and Squaw Creek recreation sites.
- Designate separate parking areas for passenger vehicles and other vehicles with boat trailers at Roza.
- Establish no-parking areas at the boat ramps and floater takeout points at Squaw Creek and Roza recreation sites.
- Mark the boundary of the recreation sites.
- Conduct regular patrols of the three recreation sites.
- Post new signs on the three recreation sites indicating change in administration.
- Coordinate and develop a multi-agency fire ordinance. (Emphasis would be on reducing wildfires through control of campfire locations and discharge of fireworks.)
- Prohibit use of fire works.
- Monitor habitats for *Lomatium tuberosum* and *Erigeron basalticus* to detect changes in species numbers and habitat.
- Establish an information program in the YRC area to assist visitors.
- Conduct a Class II cultural resources survey of the public lands where recreation use is expected to increase. Conduct a Class I survey on all remaining lands in the YRC recreation area.
- Restrict access to sensitive habitat areas west of the river during the lambing season from May 1 to June 30.
- Monitor Bighorn sheep populations to detect changes in numbers and habitat use.
- Prohibit domestic sheep grazing on all Federal lands within the YRC.
- Initiate visitor education programs as necessary to allow for the maintenance and/or enhancement of Bighorn sheep populations and habitat.
- Mark public lands along the river to minimize inadvertent or accidental trespass.
- Acquire the following Private lands in: T. 16 N., R. 19 E., Sec. 7 (365.5 acres), Sec. 17 (284 acres), 29 (38.84 acres), T. 15 N., R. 19 E., Sec. 33 (272.31 acres). As opportunities develop, acquire other private or State owned lands in the YRC to improve recreational opportunities, to provide for protection or improvement of key fish and wildlife habitats, and to provide for the protection of significant cultural resource sites.
- Develop site plans for Roza, Squaw Creek, and Umtanum Creek recreation sites.
- Develop a river access point in Sec. 6, T. 16 N., R. 19 E.
- Control noxious weeds on recreation sites by mechanical means (i.e. mowing, hand pulling, and/or grubbing with hand tools).

25. Designate all three recreation sites as day-use facilities.

26. Phase out camping at all recreation sites as the Washington State Parks and Recreation campground at Thrall is developed.

27. Continue to monitor visitor use.

28. Develop cooperative management agreements with other agencies and private landowners within the YRC. These agreements would emphasize recreation, wildlife habitat and range management activities.

29. Amend this Plan to include river management considerations by 1991.

No Action Alternative

Under this alternative the three recreation sites would be closed. Facilities would be removed and river access points would be barricaded.

Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action

The following narrative summarizes the most noteworthy environmental impacts of this proposal. For a description of other associated impacts see the attached worksheets.

Soil and Vegetation

There would be minor amounts of soil erosion associated with the proposed surface disturbing activities such as removal and construction of boat ramps and construction of traffic control structures.

Control of noxious weeds by hand pulling and grubbing would reduce soil erosion from the infested areas as native species become established. It would reduce the spread of noxious weeds to adjacent public and private lands. Repetitive treatments would be necessary to effect control.

Recreation

Restricting access to sensitive bighorn sheep habitat from May 1 to June 30 of each year, would decrease areas available for hiking. This restriction would decrease disturbance to the bighorn sheep habitat during the crucial lambing period. This impact is not anticipated to significantly affect the recreation opportunities of the area.

Control of noxious weeds would enhance the visual quality of the recreation sites and other public lands in the YRC.

Grazing Management

Prohibiting the grazing of domestic sheep on federal lands in the YRC would decrease the likelihood of their associated disease infecting the bighorn sheep populations. This reduction in grazing land for sheep would not be significant. This restriction would not affect any of the existing grazing leases in the YRC since the current use is allocated for cattle.

No Action

Under the no action alternative recreation opportunities would be curtailed. Toilets and trash collection facilities would be removed; consequently related health hazards could develop. Closing of river access points would create traffic safety hazards. The public lands would remain open for the grazing of domestic sheep. An indirect impact associated with domestic sheep grazing is the possibility of transmission of diseases to bighorn sheep populations.

This alternative could result in significant impacts relative to recreation and wildlife habitat in the Yakima River Canyon.

Persons, Groups and Agencies Consulted

Pamela Camp, Botanist
James F. Fisher, Area Manager
Neal Hedges, Wildlife Biologist
Judy Knokey, Archaeologist
Dana Peterson, Range Conservationist
Gene Wehmeyer, Recreation Technician
Gary Yeager, Planning & Environmental Coord.

Washington State Department of Wildlife
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

Environmental Consequences Worksheet

Change Agent (Management Actions)	Increase, Decrease, or No Change	Indicator	Change Estimated Quantity	Units of Measure	Context (Relative Importance, Probability, Timing, Thresholds, etc.)
Actions 1 - 29	No Change	Cultural resources, Threatened and Endangered plant and animal species	—	—	No known cultural resources or T&E plant or animal species on or inhabiting the recreation sites.
Actions #1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 27, 28, and 29	No Change	—	—	—	Administrative actions which if implemented would not result in any noticeable environmental impact.
Actions #2 and 3	Increase	Sediment load	—	—	The increase would be short term lasting 1-3 hours and it would be localized in the area of disturbance. This impact would not be significant.
Actions #5 and 6	Increase	Vegetation	—	—	Exact amount unknown. The vegetative increase would be along the shore lines of the recreation sites.
	Decrease	Soil erosion	—	—	This will occur as a result of increased vegetative growth on previously disturbed areas.
Action #12	Decrease	Wildfires	—	—	This would basically reduce the potential impact of wildfires caused by use of fireworks.
Action #16	Decrease	Disturbance to Bighorn sheep	900	Acres	Bighorn sheep are sensitive to human disturbance during the lambling season. This season coincides with the May 1 to June 30 restriction.
	Decrease	Recreation back- packing and hiking	900	Acres	The impact to recreation would be minimal since most of the activities during that time period are river oriented.
	Increase	Bighorn lambing areas	—	—	Only 900 acres of public land are involved; the exact amount of disturbance caused by hikers/ backpackers is unknown. The WSDW personnel indicated that the initial lambing areas have gradually reduced in size as hiking activities increased on the west side of the river.

Environmental Consequences Worksheet (continued)

Change Agent (Management Actions)	Increase, Decrease, or No Change	Indicator	Change Estimated Quantity	Units of Measure	Context (Relative Importance, Probability, Timing, Thresholds, etc.)
Action #18	Decrease	Disease transmis- sion to Bighorn sheep	—	—	Data indicates domestic sheep can and do transmit diseases to Bighorn sheep. In other areas this has resulted in catastrophic consequences to Bighorn sheep populations.
Action #23	Increase	Soil disturbance	0.5	Acres	This would result in an increase in soil disturbance associated with development of the access point. Random use of the area for camping would be curtailed and subsequently eliminated as the Washington Parks and Recreation Commission campground is developed and camping on the BLM recreation sites is phased out.
	Increase	Vegetation	1 to 2	Acres	
	Decrease	litter	5	Acres	
	Increase	River access	—	—	
	Increase	River recreation opportunities	—	—	
Action #24	Decrease	Spread noxious weeds	—	—	The mechanical method of control (pulling, grubbing and mowing of weeds) is work intensive and requires repetitive treatments until target species are controlled.
	Decrease	Soil erosion	—	—	
	Increase	Vegetation	—	—	
	Increase	Visual quality	—	—	
Actions #25 and 26	Increase	Vegetation	—	—	This would decrease overnight camping opportunities in the YRC. Significant impacts are not anticipated since this is to be phased in as the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission campground is completed. At most 10-15 campsites would be affected. This would also lessen impacts on vegetation and open more areas for picnicking.
	Decrease	Soil erosion	—	—	
	Increase	Picnicking opportunities	3	Recreation Sites	
	Increase	Visual quality	3	Recreation Sites	

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	Sharon Feltz

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